



Ohr Yerushalayim News

בס"ד – האזינו – סוכות תשע"ב – 18th September 2021 - Volume 14 - Issue 12

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Naftoli Stern and parents Avi and Debbie on the occasion of his Bar Mitzva this Shabbos. The Kehilla is invited to a Kiddush after davening in the Shul hall.

Mazel Tov to our Chassanim, Chosson Torah - The Rov, Chosson Bereishis - Ari Craimer, Chosson Kol Haneorim - Eric Sievers

Simchas Beis Hashoeivo

The Shul will be a holding **מוצאי יום טוב** on **שמחת בית השאיבה**, Wednesday September 22nd in the Rov's Succah, 48 Waterpark Road, from 9.30pm.

Simchas Torah Lunch

The Shul will be having a luncheon on Simchas Torah, at 1.00pm approx following davening, to which the whole Kehillah is invited. Please confirm your attendance by registering on the Shul website - <https://ohryerushalayim.org.uk/simchas-torah-luncheon-booking-5782/> - by no later than Sunday 19th September.

Chaim Aruchim

We wish Chaim Aruchim to David Wolfson on the occasion of the Yahrtzeit on Sunday 13th Tishrei for his mother.

When the Maps of Countries Are Being Redrawn

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

The Torah states, "Remember the days of old, understand the years of generation and generation. Ask your father and he will relate it to you, your elders and they will tell you." [Devorim 32:7]. Rashi does not explain this pasuk according to the simple reading. Rather, Rashi explains the pasuk as a warning: "Look at what happened to other people who came before you, when they angered Me." "Understand the years of generation after generation" refers to the era of Enosh, upon whom HaShem poured forth the waters of the Ocean, and to the era of the (people of the) Flood, whom HaShem washed away.

The next pasuk continues, "When the Supreme One distributed to nations their portions, when He separated the children of man, He set the borders of nations according to the number of the Children of Israel." [32:8]. Rashi similarly interprets this pasuk: "When He separated the children of man" refers to the Dor Haflaga (Generation of the Dispersion). This is what happens to those who anger HaShem. However, we have a long-standing tradition that "Scriptural verses do not leave their simple interpretation" [Shabbos 63a; Yevamos 11b; 24a]. Rashi himself says in a number of places that even though at times he is providing a Midrashic interpretation, the simple interpretation of the pasuk remains. The simple interpretation of these pesukim is an admonition to us to understand history and learn its lessons.

The traditional Jewish belief is that HaShem is not only the Creator of Heaven and Earth, but that He is the G-d of history. The historical events that we witness are the means by which HaShem is continuously directing His world. Simply stated, these pesukim are teaching us that when HaShem establishes the boundaries of the world, it is ultimately because of the Children of Israel. The different wars and conflicts that take place in the world and the different border changes that

occur—according to the simple reading of our pesukim—all occur because of their ultimate impact on the Jewish nation.

There is a quote from the writings of Rav Elchanon Wasserman (who himself was killed by the Nazis at the beginning of World War II): The Torah gave us a great key to understand the hinge upon which all historical events revolve—Devorim 32:8 (the previously quoted pasuk). HaShem sets the borders of nations and causes nations to inherit for the sake of the Jews. History revolves around the Jews. "For Hashem's share is His people; Yaakov is the portion of His possession" [32:9].

Rav Elchanon continued (regarding the Peace Treaty ending World War I), "when the map of Europe was drawn up in Versailles, the borders were already set in Heaven". Sometimes it takes us years, decades, or centuries to put the pieces together. Sometimes, in the interval, the activities seem to have nothing to do with the Jewish people. But the great lesson of history that we are taught in the opening pesukim of this week's parsha is that when HaShem sets up the borders of nations, it is for the sake of the Children of Israel.

I recently read (1993) that the people in MacMillan and Company—the mapmakers—are having a very hard time these days. We think that we have hard jobs! Imagine the job of mapmakers! It has been a very difficult couple of years for them. They had just finished their latest edition of the Atlas, in which they printed East Germany and West Germany. Bonn and Berlin were the respective capitals. All of a sudden, they had to reprint the map. OK, done. Now they think that they are set. Then, all of a sudden, Yugoslavia divides—Serbia, Croatia, we cannot even pronounce all these names! When we are talking maps or when we discuss borders—ultimately, we are talking Klal Yisroel.

One does not need to be a politically astute individual to realize the momentousness of the breakup of the Soviet Union. The mapmakers do not know from day to day whether they should draw 15 republics or 12 republics. We ask ourselves what difference does it make if Azerbaijan decides to become independent or not. What is the meaning of all these changes?

This is the lesson of history that we should never forget. These events—the placement of national boundaries—have an impact on Klal Yisroel.

At the beginning of World War I, the Ottoman Empire chose the wrong side and allied themselves with the Germans. At that time, a person would have had to be exceedingly insightful to have realized that this decision would have a major impact on Jewish history in the twentieth century. Our tendency would have been to think, "Who cares? What's the difference?" But that single event—coupled with the fact that there was this little country called "Palestine" under the rule of the Ottoman Turks—had major ramifications.

When Germany (and the Ottoman Empire) eventually lost World War I, their empires were disassembled. Part of the price that the Ottoman Empire paid for "picking the wrong horse" was that they lost their empire. Their little protectorate called "Palestine" became the British Mandate of Palestine. Not long after that, there was a proclamation called the Balfour Declaration. Who would have thought that the Ottoman Turk's poor decision would lead toward the Jews attaining an independent homeland in the Land of Israel?

When we see maps changing, we need to hold our breaths. This has to do with us. Somehow or another, we will be in the center of this. Sometimes it is for our benefit. Sometimes, G-d forbid, it may be to our detriment. But we are always on center stage, because “Yaakov chevel nachaloso” (Jacob is the portion of His possession). We are the protectorate of the Master of the Universe.

The Fantastic Four

Dani Epstein

There are those occasions when a serendipitous confluence of events provide an aggregate that is significantly greater than the sum of its parts, as happened during the research phase of this particular composition; more on this later.

It requires little speculation to deduce the central theme that runs through this composition given the season of its publication, and it is, naturally, Succos. Various thoughts swirl through my mind during this chag. Primarily, my concern with the eternity of the Torah – given that its Divine Author is supratemporal (in the philosophical sense) – and its relevance in the 21st century. Succos is one such primal example which requires some significant translation to our modus vivendi. Allow me to ruminate a little in order to illustrate the meanderings of my cogitation.

Some three millennia and-a-bit-ago, when our ancestors first settled Canaan, the sight of a crude shelter constructed with the barest nod to physics or building regulations such as they were, was a common sight. With perhaps two or three walls, a sampling of the local flora strewn haphazardly over the top performing the role of a roof, these rude structures served a vital cause – that of mitigating the roasting the sun cheerfully provides in the height of summer, when the overwhelming majority of the nation were engaged in agricultural pursuits which generally takes place in the open fields.

The equation of a Succah to one of these huts is in fact made by the Torah itself “למען ידעו דרתיכם כי בסכות הושבתו את בני ישראל בהוציא” (ויקא כג:מה – in order that your generations should know that in huts I settled the Children of Israel when they left the land of Egypt).

Now, I have to confess that this is not quite as simple as I make it out to be, since there is a dispute between Rabi Eliezer and Rabi Akivoh in (מסכת סוכות י”א) with regards to what the Succos in that verse referred to, with the former stating that they were the ענני כבוד – the clouds of glory, and the latter ממש עשו להם – actual huts He made for them.

Either way, the concept of the Succah was one of shade, with the crude field hut as serving as the metaphor or the embodiment.

Living in the very green and occasionally sunny heart of genteel Salford, our encounters with such structures are going to be few and far between given the paucity of agricultural activity in the area and the fact that farmers in our region of the world tend to have heaters and air-conditioning in their tractors, cars and combine harvesters as well as being serenaded in the aforementioned vehicles by a plethora of choices beamed into their cabins by dint of wireless technology, be it DAB radio or 4G (5G can kill you, dontchaknow. Always wear a tin hat. Read the label etc.). Bearing this in mind, the relevance of sitting inside a simulacrum of ancient habitats appears to have little if any value in our age of Industrial Revolution 2.0.2.1. This is particularly bewildering if your Succah happens to be an extension of your house with a PVC roof, or in my case, a geodesic dome that was designed on a computer.

Coincidentally, I am of the habit of jest that when Hashem displayed a range of kosher Succah forms to Moshe Rabaynu, our master’s eyebrows shot up when Hashem revealed to him the spherical Succoh, and he asked: “Who on earth would build such a thing?” Hashem replied: “Take it from Me, there’s a meshuggene out there who is going to do exactly that.” וכך הוי.

In my perambulations of sources for this particular offering, I happened to come across a discussion of this very topic (Succos, not geodesic succas) in the book entitled “Dalalat al-hairin” (3:43) which we are more familiar with as the מורה נבוכים or “The Guide to

the Perplexed”. This was particularly serendipitous since it addresses one of the peeves in my very excellent and copious collection, and is the subject of the fortuitous happenstance referred to in my opening remarks.

Within the משנה תורה, the Rambam restrains himself manfully from engaging in moral or ethical discourses until he is no longer able to contain himself and then injects a few very brief thoughts on any given topic that lie outside of strict halocho. When it comes to the מורה, however, the raison d’être of the work is of a purely philosophical nature which inherently allows him to express the full range of his intellectual prowess, knowledge and genius within the realm, as well as to vent his spleen on the odd occasion in a torrent of fury. His dedication to the rationalist school of תורה results in his episodic condemnation of those who negate this concept with fire, brimstone and the penned equivalent of a battery of heavy artillery. In his discussion on Succos and the ארבע מינים we can observe that the pithy aphorism “plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose” holds absolutely true almost a millennium after the Rambam’s lifetime.

Some background, however, is required in order to set the scene appropriately.

Two of the most commonly offered explanations for the mitzvah of ארבע מינים find their source in (ויקרא רבה ל) (interestingly enough, there are six possibilities offered there but four of them never seem to make it to the light of day): either the four species represent four types of Jew, or they represent the most important organs of the body.

In the former offering, the אתרוג – which has a pleasant taste and fragrance – represents individuals with both תורה and מעשים טובים. The לולב, which has no fragrance but its fruit is tasty, represents an individual that has תורה but lacks מעשים טובים. Individuals who have no תורה but posses מעשים טובים are represented by the הדס and finally those who lack either are represented by the ערבה. These four types of people are bound together resulting in the verse (עמוס ט, ו): “His congress is established on earth”.

The latter exposition has the לולב representing the spine, the הדס the eye, the ערבה equates to the mouth and the אתרוג the heart. By binding these together we reflect the verse (תהלים לה, י): “all my limbs shall declare: Hashem, who is like You?”

None of the elucidations of חז”ל offer are included or even alluded to by the Rambam, which seems a little odd that he would sail straight past them without a least a nod in their direction.

What he does explain is as follows, and I paraphrase. Both the chagim of Pesach and Succos share the same modality, in that they recall the events of יציאת מצרים and the years spent in the desert, the purpose thereof to contrast the harsh and difficult times when better times are being enjoyed. Perhaps they also provide a measure of hope in bad times that גם זה יעבור – this too shall pass, but the Rambam does not mention this. These two chagim serve to reinforce the concept that when we sit in splendid houses in the land Hashem promised to our forefathers, we receive this bounty through the kindness of Hashem and by dint of the upright and righteous manner our אבות conducted themselves in; that is to say they are visceral reminders of the gratitude we owe Hashem.

When it comes to the ארבע מינים this holds true as well. However, before the Rambam gets the opportunity to expand on the similarity of ארבע מינים with Succos and Pesach, he launches into a veritable tirade.

As mentioned but a moment ago, חז”ל provided various elucidations with regards to the meaning of the ארבע מינים. However, these are provided in an allegorical form, which are clear to those who understand their – חז”ל’s – style. By no means did חז”ל ever intend these to represent the substance of the verses in the Torah. They had messages they intended to convey through this form of prose, and used the various verses in order to illustrate their points in an almost poetic style.

Now, says the Rambam, there are two distinct groups who look at the

verses and the interpretations of חז"ל. The first are the literalists believe that חז"ל were explaining the actual meaning of the verses, and the second are the mockers who point at the verses and observe that they clearly bear no resemblance to the דרשות of חז"ל and therefore the whole thing is crazy, let's go and have some cheeseburgers and appoint my wife as the rabbi.

The literalists fight and struggle to maintain their position and treat these interpretations with the same weight they treat הלכה, whilst the second group seek naught but to denigrate חז"ל, with the inevitable result being Deformed, Masorti and Conservative Judaism. Between the lot of them they have no idea what חז"ל intended with their allegorical interpretations, which – according to the Rambam – should be clear to every reasonable reader (אשר לא יסופק ענינם על בעל שכל) (ad loc.). That is to say, at no point did חז"ל intend their דרשות to be the explanation or literal meaning of the verses, rather they wished to convey certain concepts, moral and ethical teachings which they illustrated with the verses in a literary genre common then, and both the literalists and the mockers missed the point entirely.

In this way – and this is my personal opinion – both groups end up denigrating חז"ל, since the literalists are forced to contort and twist the words of חז"ל to fit their world-view which is in itself unforgivable, and in the process produce fodder for the hungry maws of the mockers.

Now the Rambam provides a concrete example from (כתובות ה):

דרש בר קפרא מאי דכתיב (דברים כג, יד) ויתד תהיה לך על אזנך אל תקרי אזנך אלא על אוזנך שאם ישמע אדם דבר שאינו הגון יניח ידו באזניו

Bar Kappara taught: What is the meaning of that which is written: "You shall have a peg among your weapons"? Do not read it as: "Your weapons", rather, read it: "On your ear", [meaning that] if a person hears an inappropriate matter, he should place his finger [which is shaped like a peg] into his ears.

The verse in דברים actually refers to a peg or spade that soldiers were required to carry with them in order to dig latrines, and בר קפרא is employing some clever alliteration here.

"Now I wonder", writes the Rambam, "if these fools actually think that the תנא genuinely believed that the "peg" of the verse refers to "fingers" and the "weapons" actually mean "ears"? I cannot think that any person whose intellect is sound can believe this." He really does not pull his punches on this one.

He goes on to explain that בר קפרא had a beautiful moral teaching he wished to convey, viz. that not only should one not say anything repugnant but one should not listen to it either, and that he employed this verse in an alliterative or lyrical fashion to convey this thought, I suppose in much the same way a painter might do so through the medium of art or a musician with a fine composition.

Studies (e.g. Krishnan, S., Watkins, K.E. & Bishop, D.V. The effect of recall, reproduction, and restudy on word learning BMC Psychol 5, 28 (2017)) have demonstrated that word association techniques provide a powerful tool for recalling all manner of information. A simple technique for remembering completely unfamiliar terms is to create a similar sounding phrase, and use that as a mental hook for the genuine article. As an example, when our dearly beloved friend Mahmoud Ahmadinejad came to power many Brits struggled with his surname until some bright spark came up with a mnemonic: Ahmed Dinner Jacket. When I was struggling to recall the phylum of Echinodermata (starfish, sea urchins, sea cucumbers 'וכו'), the phrase "a kind of tomato" helped. Perhaps this was the intention of חז"ל when they wove their aphorisms into the verses of the Torah.

Let us return to the subject at hand, in much the same way Rambam apologetises for diverting from the topic at hand, with an equally poetic but scathing justification:

וכבר יצאתי מן הכונה אלא שהיא תועלת יצטרך אליה כל בעל שכל מאנשי התורה והרבנים

I have digressed from the subject, but it is for a purpose that is necessary for every intelligent member of the people of the Torah and the Rabonim.

It's worth reading that last sentence again, because whilst he is putting

the brakes on, quite frankly the Rambam is still in full flame-thrower mode at this point, having finally run out of brimstone and artillery shells.

How I rejoiced when I came across this fiery and finely cut gem, since I have railed many a time against the literalism that is prevalent today, in that it is not only harmful to us as a nation who ought to be imbued with the genius and infinite depths of the Torah rather than engage in endless casuistry to justify our paucity of comprehension, but it needlessly denigrates the Torah, חז"ל and ourselves. Despite pointing the existence of two lengthy essays authored by the Maharal and the Ramchal, my ire has achieved nought. With his typical brevity, however, the Rambam simply makes a couple of careful moves and before you realise it, you're check-mate.

So what exactly is the purpose of ארבע מינים according to the Rambam? His answer appears to be so prosaic, and yet it has depths to be plumbed.

The ארבע מינים represent the joy experienced by בני ישראל when they entered the land from the desert which they described as: לא מקום זרע ותאנה וגפן ורומן ומים אין לשתות – a place lacking grain, figs, vines or pomegranates and no water to drink. Now they had fruit trees and flowing water and their dire plight was relieved, they were overjoyed. So, to commemorate this momentous event, they were instructed to gather these four species, and these particular species were chosen for three reasons.

Firstly, they were commonly available in the land at that time, and therefore everyone was able to gather them with ease.

Secondly, they have a lush and verdant appearance; additionally in two cases their fragrance is pleasant. All in all, they are an excellent contrast to the barrenness of the desert the בני ישראל formally inhabited.

The third reason was that these four species are able to maintain their freshness for seven days after being plucked or pruned, which is not the case with peaches, pomegranates, quinces, pears and so on.

So, a rather simplistic-looking reason for the mitzvah with three seemingly mundane reasons for the species specified and yet they are all replete with meaning and convey messages that resonate as truly today as they did in days of yore.

If we but glance back a century ago and compare those days to today we ought to shudder at how thin the veneer of civility is, and nonetheless today we live in a מלכות של חסד. Moreover, today, we eat during the week what our grandparents did not eat even on Shabbos. When it comes to ארבע מינים, the Vilna Gaon never saw אתרוגים of the quality that we can purchase today for a couple of tenners. Due to the advancement of the technology and research that goes into the ארבע מינים industry (I am not kidding, this is a real thing) we can now enjoy the sort of quality even Moshe Rabeinu did not dream of – all at a price, of course (think Deri lulavim, bred specially for their quality and sold at a teeth-aching premium that beggars belief – it's just a palm frond after all).

When we take the ארבע מינים and wave them in all six directions, this is something we ought to bear at the forefront of our minds: conveying our deepest and most heartfelt gratitude to Hashem that we live the lives and enjoy the luxuries we do.

How does this translate into practice? This might seem a little odd, but hear me through. When was the last time you stopped for a moment and thought – "I really enjoy driving my car". I'm assuming you don't drive a rust bucket that threatens Hara Kiri at the foot of every hill (I owned one of those, and let me tell you the quality and frequency of my תפילות were significantly enhanced). This seems such a simple thought, but think of all the processes that Hashem had to make happen in order for you to enjoy your car. If you consider this in its entirety – from the mining of the ore, its smelting and refining into steel, the machinery that had to be designed in order to make these processes possible, then the technology required to design the car, manufacturer it and make it look pretty and drive nicely, the mind boggles.

Right now we are suffering from a chip shortage, so car makers have

been hit badly. Buying a new car is not necessarily a given, since there is a shortage of cars and that will only get worse for the near future; the fact that you can sit in your car and fail to actively enjoy just because you have become accustomed to it it is a monumental lack of gratitude to Hashem. Conversely, just taking a moment before you start your engine to look around the vehicle and simply inhaling in the pleasure of owning a decent vehicle then mentally tipping your hat to your Maker, is one of the finer tefillos you can make. Next time you sip a Bunnahabhain Aonadh or a Benromach 1977 (at a grand a bottle, you've got to be completely meshugge, but who am I to judge: cf. supra) and think "this is divine", repeat the phrase in your mind and mull it over as you sample the heady aroma. It's truly Divine, not merely divine. Thanks are in order.

If you turn on the aircon on a sizzling day (come one, come on, we've had some hot days, it's not always rain) and pause for a brief moment to thank your maker before you engage the gearbox (or do whatever Tesla drivers do between sitting down and driving off), what you are saying is: "Hashem, You are the source of everything, and I have aircon because You decreed thusly. Undeserving as I am, for whatever reason, You have blessed me, and I thank you because otherwise the seats and the steering wheel would be on fire."

Whilst there are many mitzvos that are inherently of a purely intellectual nature, there are many that not only have a physical component, but actively require us to enjoy and revel in its very physicality, to absorb the pleasure and perhaps putting in the forethought and effort to ensure one maximises the enjoyment.

The Succah is one that provides us with an unusual opportunity. The Succah itself is not designed to provide us with shelter from the heat – the opposite is in fact true, it's purpose is to commemorate discomfort. When it comes to the meals, on the other hand, they are supposed to be the finest we can afford in order to honour the chag, and we should be dining on the foods that we enjoy the most, (my family has the custom of consuming meat sizzling right off the barbecue which of course is simply a זכר for the קרבנות of the חג, naturally).

This apparent consumerism within the diminished comfort of the Succah is not a dichotomy.

Hillel said in (פרקי אבות(א:י"ד): **אם אין אני לי מי לי, וכשאני לעצמי מה**: (פרקי אבות(א:י"ד) **אני** - "If I am not for myself, who is for me? But if I am for my own self, what am I?" Essentially, I have to stick up for myself, but when I do, what does that make me anyway?

This is a perplexing statement, since it seems to imply that its adherents are bipolar. One minute they are – at least to themselves – the most important people in the world, the next minute they are complete nobodies.

The analysis, I believe, is far from this scenario. Hillel is telling us that we have the correct state of mind when these two opposing forces – self aggrandisement and self negation – are in equilibrium. We require a measure of both components in order to function as humans on a daily basis, as well as to deal with adversity and success in a rational manner. In times of great adversity, summing up the willpower to continue might require an exaggerated degree of "אני לי", and conversely at the moment of great success a healthy dose of "מה אני" is called for. The rest of the time, both "אני לי" and "מה אני" are required in equal measure to produce a balanced individual. Without any self-worth, a person will rapidly descend into depression and lose any will to live. With infinite egoism and egotism an individual becomes insufferable and universally hated.

This concept is perhaps the central theme of Succos. If we study and practice the Torah and cleave to Hashem as he asked us to, then the physical bounties are there for us to enjoy. This pleasure, however, has to be tempered by our acknowledgement that it is a gift from Hashem, and that thanks is due. If we sway too far across the line, we risk abandoning ourselves solely to the pleasure and lose our devotion to Hashem, with appalling outcomes. A balance is required. Succos is the catalyst that provides the momentum to achieve this equilibrium.

Davening Times

פרשת האזינו

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.04pm
Candle Lighting	No later than 7.04pm
Hashkomo	7.30am
Shacharis	9.30am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.55am
Mincha	2.00pm / 7.01pm
Motzei Shabbos	8.06pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am
Mincha & Maariv	7.00pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

ערב סוכות

Mon	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Mincha & Kabbolas Yom Tov	6.57pm
Candle Lighting	6.57pm

יום א סוכות

Shacharis	9.15am
Mincha followed by a Shiur by R' Mordechai Steinberg	6.50pm
Maariv	7.59pm
Candle Lighting	Not before 7.59pm

יום ב סוכות

Shacharis	9.15am
Mincha followed by a Shiur by R' Ari Thumim	6.50pm
Maariv & Motzei Yom Tov	7.56pm

חול המועד

Thurs / Fri	7.00am / 8.30am / 9.30am
Mincha & Maariv	6.50pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

שבת חול המועד

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	6.47pm
Candle Lighting	No later than 6.47pm
Hashkomo	7.30am
Shacharis	9.15am
Mincha followed by a Shiur by TBC	6.40pm
Motzei Shabbos	7.49pm

חול המועד

Sun	7.00am / 8.30am / 9.30am
Mincha & Maariv	6.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

הושענא רבא

Shacharis	6.45am / 8.30am
ליל שמיני עצרת	
Mincha & Kabbolas Yom Tov	6.40pm
Candle Lighting	6.40pm

שמיני עצרת

Shacharis	9.15am
Mincha followed by a Shiur by R' Shaya	6.35pm

ליל שמחת תורה

Mincha & Kabbolas Yom Tov	7.41pm
Candle Lighting	Not Before 7.41pm

שמחת תורה

Shacharis	8.30am
Mincha followed by a Shiur by R: Asher Richman	6.35pm
Maariv & Motzei Yom Tov	7.39pm

אסרו חג

Shacharis	6.40am / 7.05am / 7.55am
Mincha & Maariv	6.30pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm
Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am